

of a lighter colour, rather whitish. In all other respects, there is nothing to distinguish it from a normal elephant. She has been under observation for about a year now, and it may be remarked that no change in its colour has taken place during this period.

In a note 'on White Elephants' in the *Journal* (vol. xxvi, 1918, p. 285) Mr. H. Macnaughten refers to a white elephant calf in Burma, which though possessing a light coloured skin at birth had grown perceptibly darker as it grew up. Mr. D. F. Macfie also records (*Journal, Bomb. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, vol. xxxii, 1927, p. 214) the birth of a white elephant calf in N. Siam, and mentions the chief points looked for in white elephants to be light red skin, white hairs on body and tail, very light pink palate, eyes of a light bluish pinky colour and white toe-nails. Evidently, a milk-white colour is not to be expected; the 'whiteness' of an elephant is therefore determined on the possession of the above 'points'. On the basis of this the Travancore specimen has all the attributes of an albino elephant.

Albinism may be observed in any species or any locality and any inference from its distribution may or may not be true. The singularity of the occurrence—though there is only the present solitary instance—of the albino form of *Elephas maximus* on the Malabar Coast, as it has been classically confined to S.E. Asia, may perhaps be significant in affording another instance of faunal affinity between these two regions, a kinship similar to that existing among the Pig-tailed and Lion-tailed macaques, leaf-monkeys, lorises, and civets.

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS,  
TRIVANDRUM, TRAVANCORE.  
20th March 1946.

E. S. SIMON,  
Curator.

## 8.—NATURAL DEATH OF ELEPHANTS.

(With a plate)

The accompanying plate illustrates two stages, before and after the tragic, natural end of an elephant. The upper of the two photographs appeared in the *Phoenix Magazine* under the title of a *Dying Elephant*, and was submitted by Major P. B. Leahy. The photograph was taken in the Travancore jungles. Mr. F. Connell drew our attention to this fine picture and we tried to get in touch with the author for further details. Owing to the absence of Major Leahy from India, Mrs. Leahy kindly replied and sent us the following details as well as the photos:

'Firstly, I am afraid I have no copy to spare of the photo, but will enclose the negative, and, perhaps you could have it done in Bombay, exactly as you want it for reproduction in your magazine. The other photo I enclosed shows the elephant dead, but, from my point of view as a photographer, and, not a Big Game Hunter it is a bad photo. However you may be interested.

We had heard the elephants making an awful noise in the jungle a few days before this 'subject' was brought to my notice by some coolies. I gathered there had been a fight between two

males, but, it was confirmed when I arrived at the spot where the loser was awaiting death. His leg which was badly swollen made him completely immobile. It can plainly be seen in the photo. If the popular belief about elephants going to the accustomed burial ground be true, there is very good reason why this one couldn't do it as he couldn't walk. However this is not the first elephant to die in the 'Civilisation' of this District. There was another only a few months ago, but, I have no information about that one. It is quite possible that he was also wounded.'

It is a common belief that elephants, and several other animals, anticipate death and accordingly retire to a common 'burial ground', but though certain circumstances suggest this belief, such as the discovery of the remains of several animals in one locality, there is yet no proof forthcoming and must be treated as a popular belief with no foundation. However, it seems possible that a wounded or otherwise weakened animal may retire to a secluded spot in the jungle, or as in the case of elephants, into a river or other marshy ground; they do so not because they anticipate death, but as a means of self-protection. The wounds in the meantime perhaps become sceptic and the animal is impeded, or the ailment may increase beyond recovery and the animal succumbs to its fate. The point of seclusion may possibly be the only one in the neighbourhood and on this account many animals may consequently retire to the same spot and die. This would undoubtedly result in an accumulation of remains which would naturally give rise to the secular belief of a 'communal grave yard'. But that this is not so is supported by the fact that several animals have been recorded as found dead in the forests.

In the Tropics the agencies of destruction under natural conditions are so rapid and complete that even the carcases of large animals soon disappear without leaving any traces. It is on this account that dead animals are rarely met with in the jungles.

EDITORS.

#### 9.—A LARGE WILD BOAR (*SUS CRISTATUS*).

In your letter you were good enough to inform me that the average height of male wild boar at the shoulder is 36" and the largest specimen recorded 38½". But in Mr. Burke's statement I find that a wild boar has been recorded up to 40" in height. I give below the measurements of the record wild boar given by Mr. Burke in his *Field Shikar Book* :—

Length 68".

Height at the shoulder and between pegs 40"

Girth at the collar 43½".

Maximum girth 60".

Tushes 10¼".

Tail 12".

What you mention as the record wild boar is smaller than the record given by Mr. Burke. Probably it is due to the fact that the shooter did not send any information to the Natural History Society.